THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has made considerable progress in enhancing access to elementary education. From 4.4 crore children who were out of school in 2001, the number came down to 75.9 lakh in 2007, as per State reports. These constitute the most difficult to access group of children.

(b) The Constitutional (Eighty-Sixth) Amendment act, 2002 notified on 13th December, 2002, inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution, which provides that "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine".

(c) to (d) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an ongoing programme which provides for *inter-alia,* opening of primary and upper primary schools.

Enrolment of children in schools

362. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether one crore children do not enroll in schools on attaining the age of five;

(b) whether in Uttar Pradesh alone, 10 children do not attend the school and 50 per cent drop out after the fifth standard;

(c) if so, whether Government has made any comprehensive plan and allocation under the Eleventh Five Year Plan; and

(d) what allocation has been made for Uttar Pradesh in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) As per State reports, as on March, 2007 about 75.97 lakhs children were out of schools in the 6-14 years age group.

(b) The drop-out rates in Uttar Pradesh in 2004-05, at primary stage (Classes I-V) was 12.06 per cent. As per the State report of Uttar Pradesh the number of out of school children was 7.8 lakhs in March, 2007

(c) and (d) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an ongoing programme for unviersalisation of elementary education. The outlay for Eleventh Plan as indicated by the Planning Commission is Rs. 71,000 crore. An allocation of Rs. 3441.52 crore has been made to Uttar Pradesh for the current financial year 2007-08.

NCERT's recommendation on optional examination

363. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that NCERT's revised National Curriculum Framework has recommended to make class X examination optional, togetherwith earlier recommendations on eliminating pass/fail terminology for reducing students' mental stress;

(b) if so, the details of recommendations made by NCF on curriculum and Government's response thereto;

(c) whether Government is considering those suggestions to implement in the country; and

(d) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken for making education practical and professional?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)—2005 prepared by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has suggested ways to reduce exam related stress, such as, on board or State level examinations at other stages of schooling such as class V, VIII or XI, as a long-term measure, making the class X examination optional, thus permitting students continuing in the same school to take an internal school examination and elimination of the terminology of 'pass'/'fail'.

The other key features of the recommendations are:

(i) Flexibility in examination time;

(ii) Flexibility in choice of subject;

(iii) Continuous and comprehensive evaluation and internal assessment;

(iv) Differential levels of the difficulty in subjects.

However, NCERT has only an adivosry role in the matter. It is upto the School Education Boards to adopt the recommendations.

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has taken up following steps towards examination reforms:

(i) Provision of 15 minutes extra time for candidates to read the question paper and to plan their answer in Class X & XII board examinations.

(ii) Restructuring question papers that can be answered by all the students within the allowed time period.

(iii) Publication of support materials such as sample question papers.

(iv) Publication of Performance Analysis.

(v) Providing counseling facility.

In addition CBSE has already implemented Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation from Classes I to VIII.

(d) Vocational streams at the higher secondary stage provides for diversification of educational opporturities so as to enhance individual employability, for enhancement of supply of skilled manpower and is an alternative for those pursuing higher education.

Reconstruction process of Afghanistan

364. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is helping the reconstruction process of Afghanistan in many spheres and one of the important spheres is Education;

(b) if so, what kind of help is given to the students of Afghanistan in higher edcuation, technical education, under-graduate section and high school section;